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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

List of issues and questions in relation to the second periodic report of the Syrian Arab Republic

Addendum

Replies of the Syrian Arab Republic*

[21 January 2014]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

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Replies to the questions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in relation to the second and third periodic reports of the Syrian Arab Republic

1. Measures taken and mechanisms in place to address the negative impact of the conflict on the lives of women and girls, to protect them from violence and to ensure that the entrenched discrimination against them is not further exacerbated throughout the territory of the State Party

The Syrian Government is endeavouring, through the combined efforts of itself and civil society institutions, to combat and put a stop to all forms of violence against women. It is seeking to enhance public awareness of women's rights and to enlist the support of society to protect them from violence in all forms and of all kinds, especially in view of the fact that women are particularly at risk in the present circumstances.

In that connection, we should like to note that in the parts of the country in which armed terrorist groups are operating, extremist (Wahhabist and *takfiri*) ideological thinking is frequently encountered. The members of these groups know nothing of, and do not recognize, positive law, and do not attach any importance to international conventions, international law or human rights. Furthermore, they believe strongly that women are inferior; they deny their humanity and do not acknowledge that they have any rights. The members of these groups commit atrocities (including abduction, rape, murder, mutilation of corpses, cutting open the abdomens of pregnant women and ripping out unborn babies, cutting off heads, and roasting and eating body parts) against civilians, especially women and children. They are proud of these activities, and boast about them on their web sites. There are more than 1,500 of these groups, and all of them belong to the Al-Qaeda organization, secretly or openly. Their numbers include foreign fighters of 83 nationalities, who receive material support (in the form of money and weapons), moral support and favourable publicity from regional States that do not know the meaning of human rights, and from foreign States that claim to be supporting democracy and human rights.

In the parts of the country that are under the control of the Syrian Government, in contrast, the Government is endeavouring, in accordance with its international obligations, to combat discrimination against women in all forms and to protect women from all kinds of violence. The Government is following its regular programmes in this connection, including campaigns to heighten awareness of women's rights and the protection of those rights, publishing the text of the Convention and relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and building the capacities of persons working in that domain, such as legal personnel (judges and lawyers), media personnel, teachers, members of civil society organizations, and the like. The Government is also developing programmes expressly devoted to the protection of women in emergency and crisis situations, and psycho-social support programmes.

In addition, the Government is currently sheltering women who have been victims of violence at special care centres administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs, in some cases in cooperation with community associations. The women receive all necessary care and treatment, as well as legal assistance upon request. These centres are provided with all the facilities they require in order to ensure the care and protection of the women in their charge.

As regards **alternative sources of livelihood for family survival and the assistance provided, in particular for female-headed households**, we should like to note that all women employees of governmental institutions (most wage-earning women are employed in the public sector) are continuing to receive their salaries and benefits in full, on the same footing as male employees of those institutions, despite the fact that many such institutions, establishments and industrial facilities have been systematically targeted for destruction and devastation at the hands of armed terrorist groups. In cases where for any reason it is not possible for employees (both sexes) to remain at their original workplace, the Government has allowed them to join the staff of the nearest work centre.

The Government pays compensation to the families of State employees who have fallen victim to acts of terrorism (of whom it is estimated that there have been tens of thousands). It also pays their retirement pensions in full. Their families (including wives, mothers, sons and daughters, as defined under the relevant provisions of law) benefit from these entitlements.

Moreover, the Syrian Government is implementing support programmes for Syrian women, especially women heads of families. Some of these programmes are incorporated within the Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan, providing grants and loan facilities for assistance in establishing income-generating businesses and organizing vocational training to enhance women's capacities and improve their lives. The Government also follows up work under similar programmes, such as its empowerment of women and anti-poverty project, microcredit and microfinance programmes designed to enable women to start small income-generating business enterprises with loans on easy terms, and direct cash assistance programmes targeting primarily rural women heads of families. In addition, the Government is implementing projects aimed at providing immediate assistance to distressed families throughout the country that are headed by women, in the form of productive grants of sheep, goats, poultry, bees, fodder and seeds. It also distributes cash assistance to families. Over 30,000 families, most of them headed by women, have benefited under these programmes to date.

Women benefit both directly and indirectly from the compensation monies paid by the local directorate responsible for compensation for damage to buildings and property. The amount of such compensation depends on the estimated cost of the repairs.

Income-generating projects for women living in shelters have been incorporated into the Response Plan for 2014. Community associations are training women to manage projects of this kind.

The Syrian Government, despite unjust economic obstacles, is bearing the greater part (approximately 70 per cent) of the burden of the cost of these programmes, which are being implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs, and local

directorates in the several governorates. Non-governmental organizations and community initiatives are also contributing in this domain with support from the Government. In addition, some of these programmes are being implemented in cooperation with international organizations.

Priority in respect of the distribution of humanitarian assistance of all kinds is being given to families headed by women, without discrimination (in some cases, the families of armed terrorists are living in Government-run shelters, where they are receiving all forms of assistance).

2. Measures taken or envisaged to incorporate a gender perspective into efforts aimed at achieving peace and reconstruction

The Syrian Government is striving to enhance the role of women and to emphasize the importance of their participation as holders of decision-making posts in all areas. It is endeavouring to promote peace as a supreme value for all Syrians, and women in particular, and to ensure that Syrian women are able to participate effectively in the peace-building process.

A number of initiatives and social events have been launched in an effort to promote awareness, the values of citizenship, and peace, such as the "*Suria al-khair* (Syria for good", "*Al-umm bitlimm* (the mother gathers)" and "Syrian women making peace" initiatives.

On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November), the Ministry of Social Affairs, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration, organized a celebration and a workshop on the theme, "Syrian women as the key to peace", with the participation of the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs, the General Women's Union, and a number of Government ministries and community associations and organizations active in that domain. The workshop focused on the emergence of an effective role for Syrian women through the crisis and the resultant positive impact on women themselves and on society. The participants also discussed the need for that role to continue to promote peacemaking and effective participation by women in the peacemaking process, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1325 (2000) and resolution 2122 (2013). The workshop produced a number of recommendations relating to guidelines for a proposed action plan on the desired and anticipated role of Syrian women in attaining peace and reinforcing national unity, for consideration and adoption by the Government with a view to its subsequent implementation (see annex 1 below, which contains the full text of the recommendations adopted by the workshop).

A seminar on the same subject was recently organized under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture. A number of Syrian women activists and academics presented their views and proposals in the matter.

We should like to recall, in that connection, that women are present in all key decision-making positions in the Syrian State, including the post of Vice-President and advisor to the President; there are 30 women members of the People's Assembly and three women Cabinet ministers. A woman chairs the Higher Commission for Syrian Relief, and various popular organizations, political parties and community and civil society associations are headed by women. Furthermore, Syria has women

judges and diplomats. Women are thus able to participate effectively in the peace and reconstruction process and in the task of preserving, protecting and upholding women's rights.

We may note at this point that women are represented in the Government delegation to the Geneva 2 conference, the Ministry of National Reconciliation, national reconciliation committees within the People's Assembly, and the various civil society initiatives relating to reconciliation.

Steps taken to ensure that the military and police comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law standards

The army, police and law enforcement system in the Syrian Arab Republic are long-established national institutions that function in accordance with the provisions of the law and the administrative and disciplinary frameworks within which they operate. Their officers are subject to professional, behavioural and ethical codes of conduct that do not permit and do not tolerate any infractions or violations, whatever their nature; any such infraction or violation is dealt with in accordance with the law, which provides that every individual is accountable for his actions, especially in view of the fact that police officers are legal personnel who must undergo capacity-building and training in the field of human rights and international law. Under clear, stringent directives issued by the senior echelons, they are bound by the standards of the law in the performance of their duty.

The gravest danger to which Syrian women are subject comes from the armed terrorist groups, with their extremist Wahhabite, salafist thinking. These groups carry out abductions and subject women to sexual aggression and physical abuse, including killing; they also restrict women's freedom and impose social models which are alien to Syrian society and which humiliate and degrade women in disregard of their most basic human rights. The evidence for this is to be found in the abductions, killings and sexual aggressions that women have experienced in attacks by these terrorist groups in safe areas, most notably in the savage, atrocious attacks upon villages in rural areas of the northern part of Ladhiqiyah Governorate and the working-class residential districts around Adra.

3. **Information on reservations that are to be withdrawn**: the Ministry of Justice indicated in its letter (ref. 1153/T) of 17 July 2013 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that, after considering a memorandum from the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs concerning the withdrawal of Syria's reservations to CEDAW, it saw no legal impediment to the withdrawal of the reservations to article 2 and article 15(4) of the Convention. The matter is currently being pursued and will shortly proceed to the final stages.

Constitutional and legislative framework

4. Under article 154 of the new Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic, which was promulgated in 2012, laws and statutory instruments shall be amended so as to be consistent with the provisions of the Constitution within a period of not more than three years (i.e. by not later than February 2015). Under article 33, the Constitution provides for equality and non-discrimination among citizens on any grounds, including sex. Pursuant to executive decree No. 914 of 1 April 2013, amending executive order No. 1276 of 6 May 2013, a review committee has been established,

with members representing the Ministry of Justice, the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs, the Ministry of Religious Endowments, the General Women's Union, the Lawyers' Guild, the League of Legal Personnel, trade union women's committees, and Syrian women activists. The task of that committee is to identify all discriminatory laws that might entail violence against women and children and formulate proposed amendments. To date, the committee has examined most Syrian statutory instruments, including the Penal Code, the Nationality and Personal Status Code, the Labour Code, the Social Insurance Act, the Young Offenders Act and the Basic Law on Workers. The committee has identified all discriminatory provisions and has proposed amendments that will bring them into line with the Constitution and the relevant international conventions. Once these proposed amendments have been adopted, in whole or in part, the process of legislative reform in this domain will have made substantial progress.

Access to justice

5. Syrian law and judicial practice guarantee the right of any citizen to lodge a complaint or provide information about any infraction, and they also guarantee that the matter will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the law, that the perpetrator will be punished and that justice will be done.

The Syrian judicial system does not discriminate between women and men in respect of legal proceedings. Any complaint lodged by any women alleging failure to respect her rights or an act of violence against her on the part of any State or non-State actor will be taken into consideration by the judicial system, and the perpetrator will be tried under the Criminal Code and other laws. This means that under the Syrian judicial system, justice is fully accessible to women.

Moreover, fees for litigation in the Syrian Arab Republic, at all stages in the litigation process, are very modest, to the point of being merely nominal. The law provides that counsel shall be appointed for any accused person who is unable to retain counsel. In addition, there is a system of legal aid, instituted pursuant to legislative decree No. 29 of 2013, under which assistance for litigation purposes is available for any individual who does not possess the necessary resources.

Under the Syrian judicial system, any individual may bring a prosecution in his personal capacity. In such cases, the Public Prosecutor's Office does not have discretionary power in respect of the action; it is compelled to proceed with the case, with no option to desist or withdraw. The legal grounds for this are to be found in article 1 of the Syrian Code of Criminal Procedure, which reads as follows:

> "1. The Public Prosecutor's Office shall be competent to institute and conduct prosecutions. Prosecutions shall be instituted otherwise only in the cases specified in the law.
>
> 2. The preceding paragraph notwithstanding, where the complainant undertakes to bring an action in his personal capacity, the Public Prosecutor's Office shall be required to initiate a prosecution, subject to the conditions specified in the law, and the action may be withdrawn, halted or nullified only in the cases set forth in the law."

Article 25 of the Syrian Code of Criminal Procedure reads as follows:

"Every official agency or employee who in the course of his duties becomes aware of the commission of a felony or misdemeanour shall report the matter immediately to the competent Public Prosecutor, providing all available information and documentation relating to the offence."

Article 26, for its part, reads as follows:

"1. Every person who witnesses an attack upon public security or upon the life or property of any individual shall be required to inform the competent Public Prosecutor of such attack.

2. Every person who becomes aware, in other cases, of the occurrence of an offence shall so inform the Public Prosecutor."

It is thus clear that the law requires any person who becomes aware of an offence, whether committed against a woman or not, to inform the Office of the Public Prosecutor of the matter on pain of punishment, and consequently, prosecution for offences against women is inevitable following such information.

A number of new laws and legislative decrees aimed at strengthening legal protection for women have been promulgated. Specifically, the Syrian Penal Code, after having been amended by law No. 11 of 2013 and legislative decree No. 2 of 2 April 2013, now provides for much heavier penalties, from life imprisonment to death, for abduction and sexual aggression against women or children.

A number of legislative decrees providing for amnesty have been promulgated recently, but none of them provides for amnesty, even partial amnesty, in cases of sexual aggression.

Syrian jurisprudence is consistent: the courts have invariably held that in cases of sexual aggression, the evidence of the woman concerned is accepted, and she is a principal witness.

6. **Law on Combating Terrorism**: Article 1 of Law No. 19 (2012) includes the following definitions:

Terrorist act: Every act aimed at creating a state of fright among people, breaching public security, or damaging State infrastructure or other property, committed by means of weapons, ammunition, explosives, inflammable materials, poisonous or incendiary substances, or disease-causing or bacteriological agents, regardless of the means employed, or the use of any method for the same purpose.

Terrorist organization: a group comprising three or more individuals having the intent to commit one or more terrorist acts.

Terrorism financing: Any act of collecting or supplying, directly or indirectly, funds, weapons, ammunition, explosives, communication equipment, information or other items with a view to their use for purposes of the commission of a terrorist act by an individual or a terrorist organization.

Law No. 22 (2012) established the Counterterrorism Court as part of the Syrian judicial system. It is an independent tribunal, no authority having the power to interfere in its rulings. A number of distinguished judges who respect the common rights of citizens sit on this Court, and there are three women judges who are

examining magistrates to the Court. The rulings of the Counterterrorism Court may be appealed to the Court of Cassation, which is the highest Syrian judicial instance.

Women, like any other citizens, are arrested if they commit an act that is contrary to the law. In the present crisis, many women have been found to have participated in terrorist acts in various ways (such as carrying weapons and ammunition, smuggling armed men, distracting attention, reconnoitring, planting explosive devices, checkpoints and the like). There is a special court that deals with offences of this kind; it hears the pleas of counsel representing women who have been charged with such offences. The State will appoint a lawyer in cases where the accused herself has not retained one.

Since the beginning of the crisis period, a number of legislative decrees granting amnesty have been issued, including No. 61 of 31 May 2011, No. 71 of 23 October 2012, No. 23 of 16 April 2013 and No. 70 of 29 October 2013. To date, approximately 35,000 detainees or convicted persons, including women, have been released under these statutory instruments.

We may note at this point that any citizen may go to the Ministry of Justice to enquire about a member of his or her family (man or woman) who is being held or detained. The Ministry responds to every such enquiry within 15 days, providing information about the place of detention and reasons for the arrest of the person in question, if his or her whereabouts are known.

It is important to realize that deliberate attempts are being made in certain quarters to inflate the numbers of women being held in detention to exploit the issue for political purposes. Furthermore, there are many criminal gangs that abduct women and accuse the security services of being responsible for having done it, with a view to political gains.

7. National machinery for the advancement of women

The Syrian Commission for Family Affairs (over and above the material found in paragraph 67) is the governmental agency with responsibility for expediting the process of advancing the status of women in their capacity as family members, protecting them, and enabling them to participate more effectively in the country's human development effort.

To that end, the Commission proposes and conducts studies and research and applies policies and strategies relating to women. It serves as the national coordinator in the drafting of policies of relevance for women and following up their implementation. In addition, it proposes amendments to legislation with a bearing on women's affairs, sees to the circulation of international instruments dealing with women's rights, builds capacities, enhances awareness and musters support and backing for women's issues, and drafts periodic reports on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The National Strategy for the Advancement of Women, for its part, has not yet been evaluated. The Syrian Commission for Family Affairs intends to include in its forth-coming plan of action a draft strategy to address the negative impact of the crisis on women, provided the necessary technical support is available.

Concerning coordination mechanisms, the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs adopts a partnership approach involving all relevant State and non-State agencies in all its domains of activity and at all levels, at every stage of its activities. Those agencies are thus members of the several steering committees and technical committees that are established pursuant to executive orders issued by the Prime Minister's Office, with every agency appointing its own representatives. These committees meet to discuss, amend, refer and vote on matters within their competence. Technicians and experts within the Commission draft projects and submit them to the committees, after committee members have provided them with relevant data and information. Every project, once approved by the appropriate committee, is forwarded to the Prime Minister's Office for adoption or approval (in the case of a study, policy, strategy or plan of action) or for referral to the People's Assembly for discussion and enactment (in the case of draft legislation or an amendment to existing legislation).

Women's organizations that sit on these committees include the General Women's Union, which is the largest women's organization in Syria, the Association for Women's Role Development, the Al-Nada Association, and women's committees within the various trade unions and professional associations.

Stereotypes and harmful practices

8. Measures taken to modify the stereotyped image of women in cultural beliefs so as to achieve de facto equality between women and men in all spheres of life

The Ministry of Education is endeavouring to modify that stereotyped image and the traditional roles of men and women in society and within the family in the ways outlined in the following paragraphs.

- Providing a legislative and legal environment that ensures the realization of the principle of equal opportunity at all levels of education. This approach was described in detail in the report, in the section on article 10, under the heading I: Constitutional and Legal Framework.

- Curricula at all levels have been amended to include materials that contribute to the tasks of raising pupils' awareness, teaching them about rights and duties, and helping to alter the stereotyped image of women in society. Specifically, those materials now cover the rights of women as persons and citizens, the right to education up to the highest levels, the right to choose and practise an occupation, the right to choose a husband, equality of rights and duties within the family and in society, the right to equal opportunity in employment, education and training, the right to express an opinion, to participate in public life and to occupy all posts, the right to obtain information, legal rights and equality in law and before the law, the right to protection, health care and an adequate diet throughout life, especially during pregnancy and childbirth, the right to family planning, the right of women and children to obtain care and attention on an equal footing with men, equal duties of mother and father in the care and rearing of children, the right of women to practise social activities, the right to empowerment, and the right to demand and obtain their rights.

Curricula now include models and biographies of successful women, pioneering women, and women who have contributed to the shaping of civilization.

The Syrian Commission for Family Affairs is currently studying the curricula used in Syrian universities to evaluate content relating to gender concepts and women's rights.

In the culture sector, an aim of cultural development in the broadest sense, "culture for all", has been adopted. It features inculcation of the concepts of humanitarianism and non-discrimination toward women, and the abolition of negative customs and traditions and a culture of stereotyped views of the roles and responsibilities of women and men in society and within the family. In that context, action is being taken to support and reinforce the availability and widespread circulation of cultural materials aimed at promoting a culture of general equality in books, magazines, plays, films, the visual arts, and the like.

Literacy and adult education curricula have been developed in which the image of women has been modernized and from which all discriminatory references to women and stereotyped roles have been eliminated.

A series of literacy campaigns have been launched, and by now seven of the country's governorates are illiteracy-free. Literacy is one of a number of factors that enable women to break free of stereotyped moulds.

In the work of educational and vocational development institutes administered by the Ministry of Culture, all forms of discrimination against women have been eliminated, and larger numbers of women students are now enrolled.

There has been special concentration on cultural materials for children (stories, magazines, films, plays) to ensure that they are free of stereotyped discriminatory images of women.

Cultural productions of all kinds, especially by women, are being encouraged and supported with a view to empowering women through awards, competitions and festivals.

Cooperation agreements have been concluded with the Ministry of Justice with a view to the propagation of a culture of law that will contribute to the work of correcting prevalent beliefs about women and heighten their awareness of their rights.

Seminars, conferences and lectures on culture and cultural weeks are being held at cultural centres throughout the country. These, too, help to alter stereotyped images.

Media content is monitored to ensure that it is free of traditional stereotyped images and that it is characterized by gender equality, which in turn will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the presence of women in decision-making posts in media corporations.

The Syrian Commission for Family Affairs engages systematically in capacity-building for media personnel in the area of gender issues, women's rights and the Convention. Its mandate also includes capacity-building for undergraduates and faculty members at Syrian universities and for members of the People's Assembly, trade unions, professional associations and community organizations.

In addition, the Commission has conducted a study on young people and gender, and has disseminated its findings through workshops in every one of the country's governorates. It also presents a weekly television programme that sheds light on women's issues and women's rights and contributes to the task of abolishing prevalent negative practices in the matter of women's roles.

9. Article 548 of the Syrian Penal Code has been repealed pursuant to article 15 of legislative decree No. 1 of 2011 and replaced with the following:

"Every person who surprises a spouse, descendant, ascendant, or sibling in the act of committing illicit sexual intercourse or in a compromising sexual situation with another individual and unintentionally kills or injures either or both of them, shall be liable to imprisonment for a term of five to seven years in the case of killing."

The article makes no provision for extenuating circumstances in case of suspicion, as the former version did. Moreover, the new text replaces the word "wife" with "spouse": the latter term, in the Arabic language, may denote the conjugal partner of either sex. The article makes extenuating circumstances subject to two conditions: one is the factor of surprise, because this is recognized as a valid excuse by reason of the psychological state of the offender resulting from the unexpected situation confronting him/her. This is the element of provocation that is found in the general principles of all law. The wording adds further emphasis with the word "unintentionally". Consequently, if surprise cannot be proved, extenuating circumstances will not be recognized. The second factor is the requirement that the act of unlawful intercourse must actually have been observed; mere suspicion is not sufficient.

In this connection, we may note that this was one of the proposals formulated by the above-mentioned Commission. It was enacted pursuant to a legislative decree issued by the Minister of Justice, decree No. 914 of 10 April 2013, entitled "A proposal to repeal article 548, the act in question to be deemed a criminal offence like other criminal offences."

As regards the protection of women who have been raped or compelled to engage in prostitution, the law treats these women as victims. They are eligible for protection and shelter at special care centres, where all their needs are provided for and their anonymity and privacy are respected. These centres are maintained by the Ministry of Social Affairs and some community associations.

Violence against women

10. National mechanism to monitor domestic violence: in addition to the material on the National Observatory for Domestic Violence provided in the report, Section III, paragraph (b) ("Syrian Commission for Family Affairs"), we may note here that work has come to a halt in the second experimental stage of the Observatory because of the destruction of a number of observation posts by armed groups, while others have had equipment stolen and have lost data and documents. The equipment it will be difficult to replace, owing partly to security conditions and partly to the fact that it is impossible to buy new equipment because of the

economic obstacles that have been unjustly imposed upon the country. In view of this, the Commission is engaged in the development of a new conceptual framework for the Observatory's activities in the light of the present circumstances, in the hope of enabling it to pursue its work, perhaps in cooperation with civil society.

With respect to the Family Protection Unit, in addition to the information contained in Section III, paragraph (b) ("Syrian Commission for Family Affairs") of the report, we should like to point out that owing to the present situation, it has been impossible to continue the rehabilitation of the building because of the impact of the unjust economic sanctions, the destruction of numerous industrial facilities, and roadblocks set up by armed terrorist groups. The result has been higher prices for building materials, among other things. Consequently, the Government has had to reorder its spending priorities to concentrate on relief efforts and ensuring that the necessities of life are available to the people. The feasibility of rehabilitating the building is currently being studied by an international organization.

Concerning article 508 of the Penal Code, the amendment referred to is a step along the road: the amendment provides that the rapist shall be liable to imprisonment for a term of two years, even if he marries his victim, and five years in the event of divorce.

As regards the establishment of shelters for women who have been victims of violence, it is noteworthy that there are some that are already open. We should like to direct the Committee's attention to the issue of a Republican Decree empowering the Minister of Social Affairs to open care centres in all domains. Accordingly, the establishment of care centres is now within the remit of the minister concerned, but the Decree includes no provisions for flexibility or feasibility in the work. At the present time, community associations are being encouraged to undertake the establishment of shelters of this kind under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Corporal punishment: as the report indicated, violence against children is prohibited in schools and care institutions. The Ministry of Education has been issuing announcements and releases yearly since 1983, stating that the use of violence or punishment in schools, for any reason, is prohibited, and any teacher who disregards that prohibition is liable to disciplinary penalties, including deductions from his salary, delay of promotion, suspension, or referral to a disciplinary tribunal for the imposition of heavier penalties, up to permanent dismissal (see Annex 2, List of directives and ordinances prohibiting the use of violence in schools, with numbers and dates of issue).

These directives make it clear that the director of the school is responsible if he does not report the incident and take appropriate measures to deal with the offender. In addition, the Ministry of Education has distributed guidelines for social guidance personnel and coordinators, and has circulated two memorandums on observing violence against students, one for the guidance person and other for the instructor. By way of preventive action, the student's behaviour grade is now included among his marks, rather than types of punishment.

These directives and ordinances are applicable to all persons who work in care institutions, for they are essentially educational personnel.

On the same matter, we may note at this point that under articles 540 to 543 inclusive of the Syrian Penal Code, causing injury is an offence, regardless of

whether the perpetrator is someone outside the family or a family member. In the event of a report or a complaint and investigation as to whether the injury or damage actually occurred, the person who inflicted the injury or damage is arrested, even if he or she is a family member, and turned over to the judicial system in accordance with articles 28 and following of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The committee established pursuant to decree No. 941 (concerning amendments to article 183 of the Penal Code) has proposed penalties for the use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure.

The draft Rights of the Child bill, which the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs has now finished reviewing, in cooperation with the relevant Government agencies, provides that persons who commit violence against children shall be liable to various penalties and fines, and that those penalties shall be more severe in cases where the perpetrator is a caregiver.

The Syrian Commission for Family Affairs has organized both ongoing and periodic awareness-raising campaigns in the media on the issue of violence against women in an effort to show the psychological and social effects of that phenomenon, especially after the Commission had provided numbers and statistics on its extent and complexity as part of the findings of two quantitative and qualitative studies that it conducted on domestic violence.

11. The violence of which Syrian women are most frequently and most dangerously at risk is the violence meted out by armed terrorist groups, and violence in the refugee camps in neighbouring countries, especially in view of the prevalence of Wahhabite and *takfiri fatwas* stating that it is permissible to exploit women sexually under what is called *jihad al-nikah* ("sexual jihad") or *jihad al-sutrah* ("jacket jihad").

Under Syrian law, any girl or woman who has been subjected to violence by the army, the police or any other governmental agency may bring a complaint before the courts, inasmuch as the forces of the army and police are identifiable national law enforcement forces, and offenders that belong to them are liable to prosecution and punishment according to law on the basis of evidence, and this is what actually happens.

Women victims may seek shelter in care centres, especially those administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs, although there are some that are run by community associations. There they receive treatment and health care services, and benefit from rehabilitation programmes designed to facilitate their social reinsertion. Many girls who had been forced by armed terrorist groups to engage in "sexual jihad" in accordance with Wahhabite *fatwas* are now in such care centres, receiving a full range of services.

The Ministry of Health has converted all health care centres into relief service centres. There are also psychological support programmes for displaced women, provided by community associations.

It has been very difficult to make a preliminary assessment of the extent of gender-based violence, as these are matters that are considered not to be spoken of under prevalent social customs and traditions, while many accusations in that connection turn out to be fraudulent allegations aimed at achieving political ends, exploiting the difficulty of establishing proof in such cases. Despite this difficulty, the Ministry of Social Affairs, working in cooperation with the United Nations

Population Fund is endeavouring to make a preliminary assessment of the situation of displaced women and identify the problems confronting them, including gender-based violence in particular.

12. Trafficking in weapons is unlawful, and under Syrian law traffickers are liable to severe penalties. Carrying weapons without a licence is also an offence. To carry even a handgun requires a licence issued by the Ministry of the Interior in accordance with detailed criteria and subject to strict conditions.

This unlawful trafficking in weapons is found only in regions where armed terrorists are operating, with support and funding from regional and foreign States. Once any region is cleared of armed terrorists, weapons are impounded and collected in order to preserve civilian lives.

13. Human trafficking is a crime that is punishable under Syrian law. Persons convicted of it are liable to severe penalties under the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (law No. 3 of 2010), which attaches particular importance to women and children where they are deemed to be victims of trafficking. Consequently, the Act's provisions relating to criminalization and punishment do not affect them; on the contrary, it provides for assistance and appropriate care for them, with full respect for their human rights. Action to reinforce international cooperation to combat this crime is ongoing, and there is a directorate within the Ministry of the Interior that is dedicated to combating human trafficking. It is staffed with highly qualified experts of both sexes who track and prosecute crimes of this nature. More than one trafficking ring has been dismantled in the course of the present crisis. Shelters are available for victims of human trafficking (one in Aleppo and another in Damascus).

Steps taken in this connection include the preparation of a national plan to combat human trafficking. The plan is structured around four main lines of emphasis. The first of these sets out comprehensive policies for the elimination of trafficking, the promotion of awareness, action to combat trafficking in human beings, and national capacity-building. The second main line focuses on measures to protect and care for victims, provide full security for them, facilitate their reintegration into society, and train persons in dealing with them. The third of these lines of emphasis deals with judicial prosecutions, while the fourth is dedicated to building partnerships and national, regional and international cooperation.

Numerous capacity-building workshops for personnel working in this field have been organized within the Government ministries concerned (including the Ministries of Justice, the Interior, Social Affairs, Labour and Health) as well as community organizations, in most of the country's governorates.

Additional measures taken in this area have included capacity-building workshops for persons who work in shelters for victims of human trafficking.

Furthermore, a number of psychological, social and legal care programmes have been developed, which ensure meticulous application of the provisions of law relating to protection, cultural, psychological and social care and assistance, access to appropriate care, confidentiality and privacy, and counselling and legal assistance upon request.

At the present time, action is under way to have victims of trafficking included in the categories of persons covered by the protection and social services component of the Response Plan for 2014, which is to be implemented in cooperation with the United Nations.

In this context, we should like to direct the Committee's attention to media reports about human trafficking rings in camps and host countries, most notably Jordan and Turkey. The worst forms of human trafficking are those that go on surreptitiously in camps and the host countries under the names of "jacket jihad" and "sexual jihad", with underage Syrian girls being trafficked, within sight and hearing of the international organizations concerned and the Governments of the host countries where the Syrian refugees are.

The Ministry of Social Affairs is working in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund to assess the situation of displaced women in order to put a stop to the most obvious forms of their suffering in the circumstances of the crisis. That research will lead to the development of appropriate action to address the situation and work programmes to relieve their suffering and put an end to the harm they have sustained.

Partnership in political and social life:

14. Quotas for women under the Parties Law and the Electoral Law:

The Parties Law, promulgated under legislative decree No. 100 of 2011, represents a qualitative shift in the progress of the reform programme in Syria. It institutes political pluralism as a fundamental pillar of the democratic system, creating as it does a broad, diversified space for political participation and the establishment of sound political life. To ensure that this becomes reality, article 8(d) of the Constitution provides that political parties may not be established on a religious, sectarian, tribal, regional, factional or professional basis, and may not discriminate on grounds of gender, origin, race or colour.

Under article 5, political parties are required to function in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, democratic principles, the rule of law, respect for public rights and freedoms, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the international treaties and agreements that Syria has ratified.

The Parties Law does not differentiate between male and female citizens as regards membership in political parties or the establishment of political parties. Article 2 of the Law states, "Citizens of the Syrian Arab Republic have the right to establish and to belong to political parties, in accordance with this Law."

The actual situation reflects this, with women's membership of political parties licensed under the Parties Law tending to fluctuate in a range between 30 and 40 per cent. Women hold leadership posts, and two parties, out of a total of ten that are licensed under the Law, are headed by women. The platforms of all licensed parties include programmes designed to activate the role of women in political life, and their by-laws provide for gender equality, non-discrimination, and the empowerment of women.

The Electoral Law, for its part, guarantees that every Syrian citizen, male or female, who has reached the age of 18 years has the right to stand for election and to vote.

As the report noted, women are present in all decision-making posts in the Syrian Arab Republic: Vice-President, two advisors to the President, three ministers, 30 members of the People's Assembly, 35 per cent of the diplomatic corps. Women head various boards and directorates, and are assistant ministers in all ministries; there are also women university presidents, deans of faculties, directors of hospitals, and the like.

In the current crisis, women sit on national reconciliation committees within the People's Assembly and the Ministry of Reconciliation. The Higher Commission for Syrian Relief, which oversees humanitarian assistance and relief services, is headed by a woman, namely the Minister of Social Affairs, and three of its 10 members are women. The director of the National Fund for Social Assistance is a woman, and the branch relief committees in the several governorates include women members. Many community initiatives aimed at reconciliation and relief are headed and run by women.

The presence of women in such positions enables them to participate in decision-making in matters relating to the crisis, including the provision of relief services in particular.

Women are also represented in the judiciary, accounting for 20 per cent of its members (of a total of 1740 judges, 302 are women). one of the highest percentages in the entire region. Women judges preside over nearly all kinds of courts, but more particularly courts in which the nature of the cases heard requires the presence of a woman. There are two women judges who hold the rank of Vice-President of the Court of Cassation, one who is head of a chamber of that court, and 10 who are advisors there. The Deputy Minister of Justice is a woman. Appointments to the judiciary are made on the basis of the criteria of competence and qualification, regardless of the sex of the candidate; this goes without saying in the case of a professional body in which confidentiality is crucial, like the judiciary.

15. **Draft Associations Law**: the draft bill has been tabled in the People's Assembly for discussion and comments. It is under consideration at the present time. This is the final stage before enactment.

The Associations Law currently in force guarantees that women, exactly like men, have the right of freedom of speech, freedom to found associations, and freedom of peaceable assembly. These are rights enjoyed by all Syrian citizens, and are guaranteed under the current Constitution, as they were under its predecessor. Many associations are headed by women, and many women sit on their boards of directors. The new Associations Law adopts the same position, but adds new, flexible procedures that will facilitate the establishment of more associations.

As regards measures taken to protect women human rights defenders, we may note that the peaceful domestic political opposition in Syria has included women representatives since the beginning of the crisis, alongside their male counterparts. They express their views in complete freedom, even to calling for an end to the regime. These women are featured in media interviews and participate in seminars,

meetings and conferences organized by the political opposition both inside the country and abroad.

In this connection, we should like to direct the Committee's attention to the fact that the label "defence of human rights" is used by some as an excuse for other purposes. How can anyone claim to be a defender of human rights while defending the acts of terrorists, including destruction, devastation, bombings, abductions, rape and murder, covering and justifying these criminal acts, when not participating in them personally, under the slogan "defence of human rights"?

Nationality

16. **Concerning measures taken to amend the Nationality Law** to ensure that women married to non-Syrian nationals can pass on their Syrian nationality to their children, we may note, first, that children born of a lawful marriage between a Syrian woman and a non-Syrian national have their father's nationality and are not stateless.

A committee established pursuant to executive order No. 9660, issued by the Prime Minister's Office on 19 July 2011, has been charged with the task of drafting an amendment to article 3 of the Nationality Law (law No. 276 of 1969). The committee has produced a proposed draft text containing an additional paragraph that would provide for the granting of Syrian nationality to the children of a Syrian woman married to a non-Syrian national. This draft has been submitted to the Prime Minister's Office.

The committee established pursuant to legislative decree No. 941 has drafted a comprehensively amended version of the Nationality Law with a view to bringing it into line with the 2012 Constitution. The amended text will provide that rights and conditions shall be equal for all Syrian citizens (men and women), and that their nationality shall be transmitted to their children born of a marriage with a non-Syrian national.

Concerning measures in place for the issue of identity documents and necessary documentation so that women are able to exercise their legal rights

The Government has taken all the necessary measures to ensure that Syrian citizens of both sexes are provided with identity documents and other papers, especially in regions in which armed terrorist groups have destroyed civil status records. The Ministry of the Interior has established alternative locations where people can receive official documents. The civil registry is automated, and there is a central copy of every record in the capital, and this helps ensure that all citizens can receive their official documents.

Concerning legislative decree No. 49 of 2011, Syrian citizenship has been granted pursuant to that decree to persons registered with the registry of foreign nationals in Hasakah. A total of 124,949 persons are now covered under legislative decree No. 49, while there have been 105,631 applicants, of whom 72,000 are citizens who have received identity cards, with all the rights of citizens. The process of issuing identity cards to the remainder is currently under way. The legislative decree is applicable only to foreign nationals registered with the registry of foreign nationals in Hasakah Governorate.

Concerning the *maktoumeen*, mechanisms for dealing with their situation are now available. Under the law, every Syrian citizen who has reached the age of 18 years and is not registered with the civil registry may be listed on his father's record under what is known as the *maktoumiyah* [registration of previously unregistered persons] procedure.

Education and health

17-18. Since the beginning of the crisis, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has responded immediately and effectively to the humanitarian needs of citizens who have been harmed as a result of the acts of armed terrorist groups. It has devoted all its efforts and resources to the task of meeting those needs in terms of basic requirements (including food, shelter and housing, health and education, and immediate compensation for citizens who have lost property), working through the Higher Commission for Syrian Relief and the Higher Commission for Reconstruction. Information about the Government's accomplishments in meeting the humanitarian needs and vital necessities of citizens who have suffered harm is summarized in the following paragraphs.

To date, the Government has provided 986 temporary accommodation centres for internally displaced citizens in all governorates of the country. These supply all basic services for the accommodation and necessities of life of the people concerned.

The Government has allocated a budget of 30 billion Syrian pounds for 2013 and 50 billion Syrian pounds for 2014 for the Relief Commission and the Reconstruction Commission to cover the cost of relief work and rehabilitation plans, including:

- Food and non-food aid, rehabilitation of shelters, construction of the housing units needed to accommodate displaced citizens, and other essential relief work for approximately 4.5 million displaced persons;
- Compensation for citizens who have sustained losses as a result of the destruction of their private property in terrorist acts;
- Rehabilitation of destroyed public infrastructure and buildings and their incorporation within the framework of relief plans.

The Government has earmarked 2 billion Syrian pounds (international funding) for the rehabilitation of shelters, in addition to 5 billion Syrian pounds for a project featuring the construction of housing units to shelter displaced persons in Adra, Homs and Dar'a, from the account of the Reconstruction Commission.

The Government is continuing its support for basic commodities (bread and petroleum products), which have been made available to 23 million Syrian citizens, despite the enormous burden resulting from the unjust economic sanctions that have been imposed upon the Syrian people. By way of examples, 1 kg of bread costing 131 Syrian pounds is sold to citizens for 9 pounds; 1 kg of sugar costing 75-80 Syrian pounds is sold to citizens for 25 pounds; 1 kg of rice costing 140 pounds is sold to citizens for 25 pounds. The Government continues to subsidize fuels and petroleum products significantly. By way of examples, a cylinder of household gas costs the Government the world price of 1,600 Syrian pounds, whereas it is sold to citizens for 1,000 pounds; a litre of heating fuel

(furnace oil) that costs the Government 131 pounds is sold to citizens for 60 pounds; a litre of benzene that costs the Government 107 pounds is sold to citizens for 100 pounds. It is thus clear that the Government is subsidizing these products by a factor of more than 100 per cent in many cases, as in the case of bread, and is doing its utmost to provide and distribute them to people despite the production-related and logistic difficulties created by the continuing attacks by armed terrorist groups against petroleum product production, storage and transport facilities, attacks against the strategic reserve of wheat, flour mills and agricultural harvests, the blockade on the Syrian economy, and the unjust economic sanctions that have directly impacted Syrian citizens of all social strata.

Attacks against institutions in the education sector have left 3,004 schools unusable, while 1,007 schools[1] are being used as temporary accommodation for displaced people. The Government provides free education, including school supplies, notably textbooks, for 4 million pupils at all levels of basic and secondary education. This education is delivered through 22,300 schools in all regions and in all the country's governorates, thereby ensuring continuation of the education process. Schoolbags, paper and other supplies (including clothing) have been made available to all displaced school children. Children whose schools have been destroyed or taken over by armed gangs, or whose schools have been converted into shelters, have been transferred to other schools nearby, or to schools in safe areas. To offset the shortage of school facilities, double classes have been reintroduced in over 50 per cent of the country's schools, after the Ministry had nearly ended that system. Prefabricated extra classrooms have been added at some schools to accommodate the additional displaced pupils.

In addition, guards have been assigned to protect schools from attacks by armed gangs, and school attendance by displaced pupils without documentation has been facilitated by the use of data probing. The Ministry has issued directives prescribing tolerance in the matter of school uniforms. Furthermore, intensive curricula have been introduced, to enable pupils who have missed a year to complete the work of two school years in a single year. Electronic self-learning curricula and education programmes have been adopted throughout the system, and summer courses have been adopted with a view to enabling pupils to advance from one grade to the next after passing an examination.

A system of make-up examinations for the secondary-level certificate has been introduced in order to provide an opportunity for pupils who have not been able to take examinations in all subjects.

Teachers, for their part, have been given psychological and social support training and training in evacuating the school building in case of emergency. Transfers of male and female teachers to safe areas have been authorized.

Syrian students in neighbouring States and refugee camps are a source of concern for the Syrian Government, for reports show that dropout rates among them are high.

[1] It is important to note that in some cases, two or three schools are located in the same complex or building. When these schools are used as a shelter, the entire complex is counted as a single shelter. Hence the discrepancy between the totals of 941 shelters and the use of 1,007 schools as shelters.

The Ministry of Higher Education has adopted similar measures to ensure continuity of the education process. Those measures include allowing students to attend the corresponding faculties in other governorates and take their examinations there, granting them additional years to complete their requirements, and authorizing private universities to open temporary facilities in safe parts of the country.

The economic sanctions and attacks by armed terrorist groups on health care facilities, medical personnel, the service delivery system, pharmaceutical production plants and supply convoys have inflicted heavy damage on the health care sector in Syria. Sixty-two hospitals belonging to the Ministry of Health have been damaged, including 38 that have been rendered completely unusable, out of a total of 124 public hospitals for the country as a whole (92 operated by the Ministry of Health and 32 operated by other ministries), while 669 health clinics providing primary health care and care for mothers, infants and elderly people have been rendered unserviceable, out of a total of 1,921. Some 409 ambulances have been disabled, and 25 pharmaceutical production plants, out of a total of 72, which formerly covered 93 per cent of domestic market demand, have been heavily damaged, while 191 specialized equipment items used to transport medications and vaccines have been rendered unusable. Medical personnel have been targeted, with 89 killed, 111 wounded and 26 abducted to date, to say nothing of the fact that many senior medical personnel have left the country following threats of death or abduction. Despite these heavy burdens and massive challenges, the Government has continued to provide all citizens with medical services, completely free of charge, through the hospitals and medical centres belonging to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Higher Education throughout the 31 months that the crisis has lasted. By way of illustration, free health care services are delivered every year to 200,000 diabetics, 250,000 cardiac patients, 520 cases of leishmaniasis, 400 cases of tuberculosis, 200,000 cases of diarrhoea and infectious diseases, 400 cases of AIDS, 15,000 cases of tumours, 200,000 cases of biological disorders and adult vaccinations, 2,000 kidney transplants, and 2,000 cases of hepatitis B and C, at a total cost of tens of billions of Syrian pounds annually. In addition, the Government provides basic vaccinations against common diseases to over 2 million children annually through immunization campaigns, and this has continued throughout the period of crisis, despite continuing attacks by armed groups aimed at preventing Syrian children from receiving these services.

The Government has also rehabilitated primary and emergency care units at 24 hospitals that had been damaged following direct attacks against them and the theft or destruction of equipment. It has done the same for mother and child care units at 35 health care centres that had been damaged, repaired and refitted 60 ambulances and put them back into service, and dispatched 398 shipments of pharmaceuticals to the various governorates since the beginning of 2013, including "hot" regions where the need is greatest.

The Government is currently endeavouring to contain polio (of which several cases have recently been reported) through six successive nation-wide immunization campaigns at intervals of four weeks, and another campaign aimed at immunizing Syrian children under five years of age in all parts of the country. Additional immunization clinics will be held between the first and second campaigns in high-risk regions (in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate).

The Government is putting together national technical teams with representatives from all the ministries concerned to carry out these campaigns, ensure that the vaccines are safely and quickly delivered, and ensure that the health-care workers involved are safe from attacks by armed terrorist groups while performing their duty of immunizing children.

The appearance of a number of cases of polio in Syria, after it had finally been eradicated in 1999, is attributable to a number of factors:

1. The virus originated in Pakistan and was brought to Syria by armed terrorists arriving in large numbers from other States with encouragement, funding and assistance from certain regional States and with support from foreign States claiming to be defending human rights.

2. *Fatwas* issued by *takfiri* Wahhabite groups stating that the acceptance of vaccines provided by the Syrian Government is unlawful.

3. Some opponents have used the media and various other means of communication to urge people not to have their children immunized on the pretext that the practice is harmful.

The continuing, systematic attacks by armed terrorist groups against electrical transmission lines and gas distribution systems are directly affecting the work of hospitals, especially intensive care and infant care units.

The unjust economic sanctions are affecting the delivery of supplies to hospitals, including medical equipment, spare parts, pharmaceutical products, sera and other supplies.

The army of the Syrian Arab Republic is courageously defending and devoting great efforts to the task of protecting health care establishments, but its task has been made very difficult by the tactic of explosive-laden vehicles driven by suicide bombers who belong to armed terrorist groups. An example of this is the attack that blew up the Al-Kindi Hospital in Aleppo and the killing and abduction of many of its eminent senior medical personnel. This was a teaching hospital, the only one in the northern part of the country, that provided care for cancer patients free of charge.

The Ministry of Health provides health care services at shelters for persons who have had to leave their homes. There are medical teams at small shelters, or patients at shelters who need care may be transferred to nearby health care centres.

Health care centres or medical service delivery points within larger shelters and complexes have been opened. Travelling medical teams and mobile hospitals are also used to deliver health care services, including reproductive health services.

Health care workers are given training in psychological support and primary psychological relief, while in most governorates heads of service receive training in a basic minimum package of reproductive health care in emergency cases, including information on gender-based violence.

Health care centres provide services, including reproductive health services in particular, to anyone upon request. These centres receive all necessary supplies periodically.

That said, it is difficult to state with certainty that services reach all citizens, owing to the fact that people move about and live in different places; this is particularly true of reproductive health services, which require privacy and an experienced practitioner. None the less, action to provide a minimum package of basic services in the health care sector is proceeding, although the economic sanctions have meant that the reality has been less than ideal.

Action to ensure the safety of health care professionals has featured training in the protection and security of health care establishments and safe evacuation procedures.

Refugees and internally displaced persons

19. The available data indicate that there have been a total of approximately 4,580,000 internally displaced persons, of whom approximately 160,000 are living in Government-run shelters and approximately 4,400,000 are living in the community (with family or relatives or in rented lodgings). Between 55 and 60 per cent of these persons, especially those living in Government-run shelters, are women. Please refer to Annex 3, which contains a table showing numbers of displaced families and individuals in shelters and living outside shelters in all regions.

The Ministry of Social Affairs is currently conducting a study aimed at evaluating the situation of displaced women with a view to identifying problems and determining needs.

The Government, working in cooperation with the Syrian Red Crescent and community associations, is making a great effort to provide assistance to all regions without discrimination. It should be noted that aid convoy teams are at risk of theft, abduction and death at the hands of armed terrorist gangs, which set up roadblocks and blockade entire regions for long periods of time, and target civil aircraft in order to prevent the delivery of assistance.

Disadvantaged groups of women

20. Widows receive compensation payments and pensions if their husbands were State employees. Other widows receive assistance through relief efforts. There are large numbers of community associations that seek to relieve the situation of women in this category, working with support and encouragement from the Government.

Marriage and family relations

21. Concerning discriminatory provisions in the Family Status Law, we may note here that the committee established pursuant to decree No. 941 has identified all the discriminatory provisions of that Law and is drafting proposed amendments that conform to the provisions of Islamic law, the divine *sharia*, relying on liberal interpretations of those provisions.

It may be useful to note at this point that under the Family Status Law, women's consent is not made conditional in any way (articles 5 and 14). Women have the right to seek a divorce, and the Law gives the judge the right to withhold permission for a second marriage if the husband does not have valid legal grounds. Furthermore, children beyond infancy have the right to choose to live with their

mother. The Law also grants the mother the right to travel with her infant without permission if there is reason to fear for their safety (in case of necessity).

The Ministry of the Interior has issued directives aimed at facilitating travel by women with children without the permission of the father or guardian.

22. **Concerning accession to the amended article 20 of the Convention and the Optional Protocol to the Convention**, Syria is still considering the possibility of acceding to the amended article 20 and the Optional Protocol.

Annex 1

Recommendations for guidelines adopted by the "Syrian women as the key to peace" workshop

25 November 2013, Damas Rose Hotel

Syrian women, as they call for peace, firmly proclaim their rejection of any dictation by outside forces that infringes the principle of Syrian sovereignty and the independence of the Syrian homeland. They also call for national unity. Our hope is that the Syrian Government will accept the recommendations reached at the "Syrian women as the key to peace" workshop organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration, in the form of proposed guidelines, and will convert them into an implementation matrix for adoption by the agencies concerned. Those recommendations are summarized in the following paragraphs.

1. Establishment of committees tasked with elucidating facts and determining the numbers of violations suffered by Syrian citizens, and women and children in particular, as a step toward realizing national reconciliation and peace (documentation of perpetrators).

2. Enforcement of existing laws and enactment of new laws that will protect women from being at risk of violence in crises.

3. Selection of socially influential cadres by the means outlined below:

(a) Conducting surveys of women who have suffered harm (wives, mothers and children of martyrs, women who have escaped from incidents of violence in the present crisis, forcibly displaced and emigrant women of all kinds) and who have played a positive role in the effort to eliminate violence within their societies, with a view to shedding light on their successful experiences, in order to encourage women to participate and play a positive role in launching peace-making initiatives of their own, or to contribute to the work of reconciliation and conflict resolution committees in pursuit of a lasting peace, working to that end in cooperation with other relevant agencies;

(b) Making creative use of the vision of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the experience of national and international institutions to empower civil society organizations, build their capacities, and promote networking and coordination among them in an effort to help them become effective in stimulating and nurturing humanitarian peace-building initiatives (non-governmental organizations, popular organizations, professional associations, unions, civil society, voluntary initiatives and individual volunteers), and to strengthen the concept of voluntary action and endow it with implementation mechanisms;

(c) Developing programmes aimed at heightening awareness of the role of women in decision-making.

4. Action to develop a mechanism for the implementation of protection and equality programmes directed at women, based on the Syrian view of the subject of resolution 1325 (and also of matters relating to the Constitution, the electoral system, the police, the judiciary, and so on), and increased participation by women in reconciliation, dialogue, and peace negotiations.

5. Greater representation for women at all decision-making levels in institutions with a view to resolving conflicts and putting an end to the effects resulting from them, as a means of realizing peace.

6. Affirmation of respect for the civilian and humanitarian aspect, and concern for the distinctive nature of women and girls during the present phase, and emphasis on cultural characteristics in a framework of national unity.

7. Activation of the role of women in applying the criteria of transitional justice in accordance with the national vision, by ensuring the participation of Syrian women, including in particular activists and those who have been harmed, in the several domains of women's rights during the preparation and supervision of transitional justice processes.

8. Affirmation that the issue of women is inseparable from the issue of the nation in peace-building in any national or international partnerships or discussions relating to political decision-making.

9. Emphasis on the role of the media in supporting a culture of peace, the realization of national reconciliation, and action to combat violence against women, and the development of mechanisms to attain that goal.

Annex 2

Numbers of directives and ordinances prohibiting the use of violence against pupils in schools and prescribing penalties for teachers found to have contravened them

No. of directive	*Date of directive*
(4/13)2661/543	7 November 2012
(4/3 1853/543	16 August 2008
(1) 2493/543	30 August 2007
(4/3) 1073/543	13 … 2005(4?)
(4/1) 120/543	13 … 2004
(4/3)3045/543	9 December 2001
(4/10) 2069/543	10 October 2001
(4/10) 2537/543	3 October 2001
(4/3) 2449/543	19 November 2000
(4/1) 2322/543	28 December 1996
(4/3) 2699/543	14 December 1992
(4/3) 1877/543	27 September 1988
(4/3) 3034/543	30 November 1983
(4/2) 373/543	2 February 1986

Estimated numbers of families and individuals in Government-administered shelters or places of shelter within the community (Table 1)

	Government-administered shelters			*Places of shelter within the community*			*Total displaced persons*	
Governorate	*Number of families*	*Number of individuals*	*Most recent update of numbers*	*Number of families*	*Number of individuals*	*Most recent update of numbers*	*Number of families*	*Number of individuals*
Damascus	1 647	7 897	8 June 2013	80 610	403 090	31 Oct. 2013	82 265	410 987
Aleppo	8 051	39 344	26 Aug. 2013	140 315	701 575	"	148 366	740 919
Rif Damascus	5 038	25 094	19 Sept. 2013	140 037	700 185	"	145 075	725 279
Homs	2 501	13 472	27 Oct. 2013	136 619	683 095	"	139 120	696 567
Hamah	378	1 767	11 July 2013	105 410	527 050	"	105 788	528 817
Ladhiqiyah	817	4 020	11 March 2013	33 731	168 655	"	34 548	172 675
Idlib	163	788	11 June 2013	56 155	280 775	"	56 318	281 563
Hasakah	833	5 131	11 March 2013	15 563	77 815	"	16 396	86 946
Tartus	1 462	6 655	20 Oct. 2013	39 228	196 140	"	40 690	202 795
Raqqah	3 696	18 202	24 Feb. 2013	35 155	175 775	"	38 851	193 977
Dar'a	4 263	21 207	10 June 2013	30 706	153 530	"	34 969	174 737
Suwayda'	2 066	10 320	11 March 2013	3 139	15 695	"	5 205	26 015
Qunaytirah	454	2 374	11 Sept. 2013	6 529	32 645	"	6 983	35 019
Dayr al-Zawr	515	2 815	10 Oct. 2013	61 042	305 210	"	61 557	308 025
Total	**31 884**	**159 076**		**884 247**	**4 421 235**		**916 131**	**4 580 311**

Source: For numbers of displaced persons in shelters, National Fund for Social Assistance data. Numbers of displaced persons living outside shelters are estimates based on numbers of food baskets distributed by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

Remark: Precise detailed statistical data for displaced individuals living outside Government-administered shelters are not available.